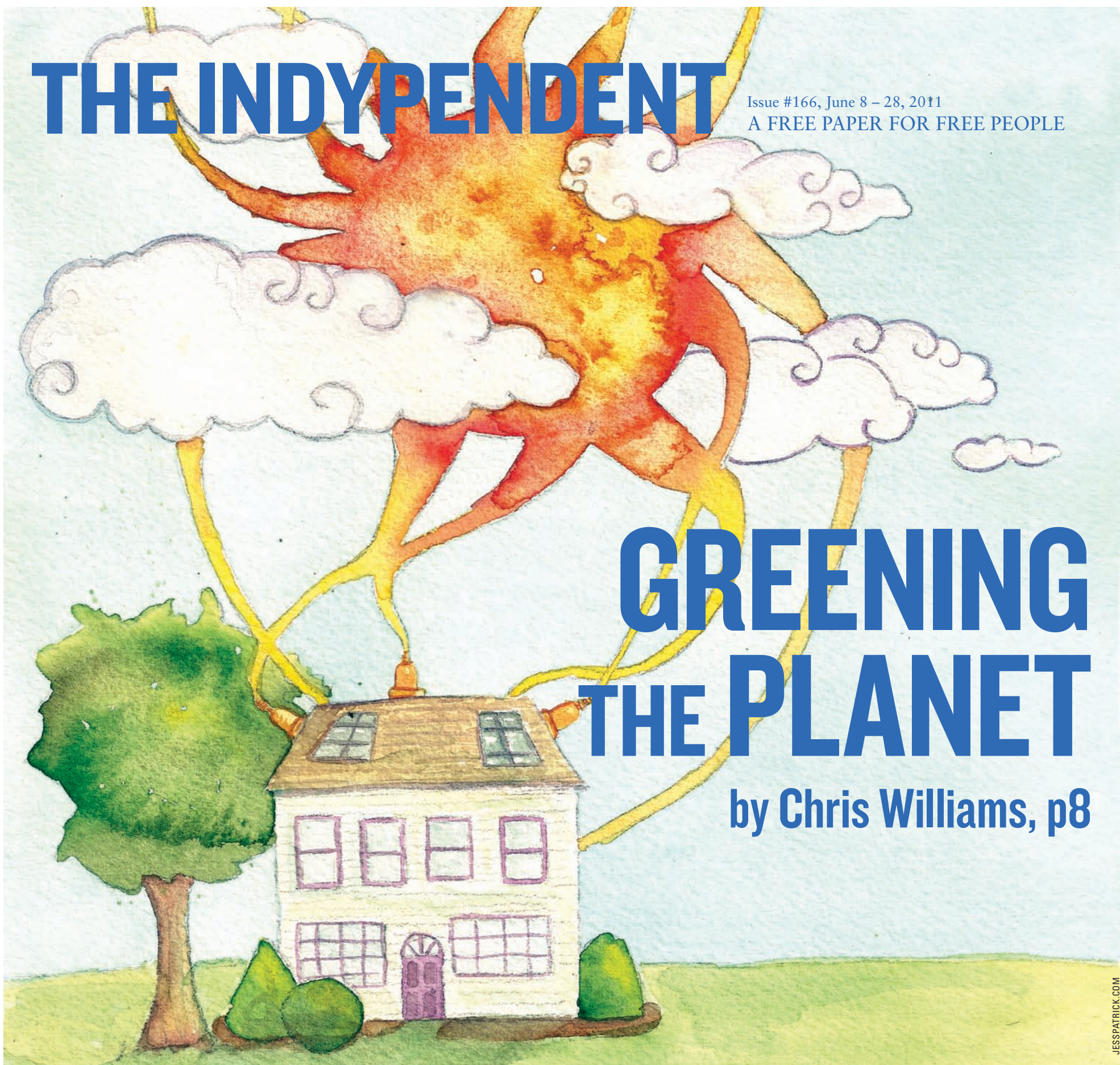


THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #166, June 8 – 28, 2011
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

GREENING THE PLANET

by Chris Williams, p8



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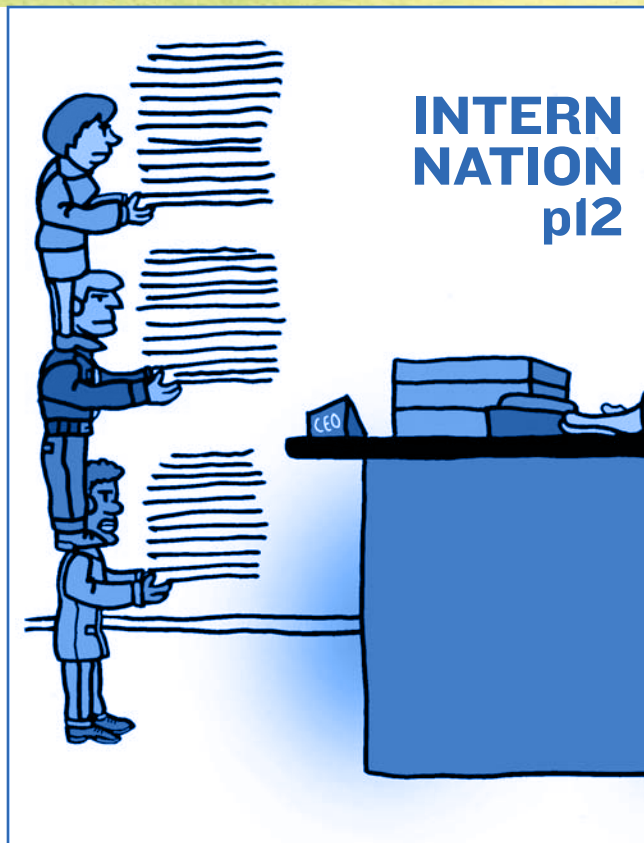
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THE INDYPENDENT

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The Indypendent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center, which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and with *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com.

SUN JUNE 12

12:30pm • Free
MEETING: RADICAL EDUCATORS BOOK CLUB. Educators and those interested in pedagogical practices are invited to come discuss the book *What Does it Mean to Be Well Educated?* by Alfie Kohn. Kohn's book questions how we determine what "well-educated" means and how such a standard is decided in our society. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St 212-777-6028 • stina@riseup.net

TUE JUNE 14

6-7:30pm • Free
ACTION: FAIR FOOD POTLUCK. Stand with the workers of Mario Batali's Del Posto Restaurant as they protest illegal practices in their workplace, such as wage misappropriation and discrimination, with a just food potluck. Bring your favorite food that is grown, sold or served by workers treated with dignity to show the owners of Del Posto what just food looks like. Del Posto Restaurant, 85 10th Ave 917-514-7027 • jeff@rocny.org

6:30pm • Free
ACTION: SLEEP OUT. Opponents of the Mayor's proposed budget cuts will begin a week-long sleep out on the sidewalk outside City Hall immediately following a rally by DC 37. Sleep out, speak up and fight back against bailouts for the rich and austerity for the rest of us. Centre St. (btwn Chambers and Spruce Sts) nocutsny.wordpress.com

TUE JUNE 16-THU JUNE 30

Various times • \$7-12
FESTIVAL: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. With 18 films from 12 countries, the Human Rights Watch Film Festival offers a week of hard-hitting explorations into social justice struggles around the globe. Visit hrw.org for a full list of films and more information on special screening events. Film Society of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th St 212-290-4700 • hrw.org

FRI JUNE 17

7pm • \$5
FILM: *BROTHER TO BROTHER*. As part of Harlem Pride Week, the Reel Resistance

Film Series presents a special screening of *Brother to Brother*, a movie that tells the story of the civil rights and lesbian/gay liberation movements. Freedom Socialist Hall, 113 W 128th St 212-222-0633 • fsp@nycn.net

SAT JUNE 18

2 pm • Free
PARADE: THE MERMAID PARADE. Celebrate the beginning of summer and the wacky spirit of Coney Island at the nation's largest art parade. Begins at W. 21st St. and Surf Ave. coneyisland.com/mermaid.shtml

4-6pm • Free

FILM: *COINTELPRO 101*. Join a panel of former political prisoners to watch and discuss the documentary *Cointelpro 101*, which follows illegal government crack-downs on several liberation movements throughout the '50s, '60s and '70s. The event is hosted by NYC Jericho Movement, NYC Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee and the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition. Brecht Forum, 451 West St 718-325-4407 • jerichony.org

SUN JUNE 19

10:30am-12:30pm • Free
EVENT: PEACE RIDE TO STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM OF TIBETAN ART. Times Up! invites cyclists of all ages to join them on a ride through Staten Island to visit the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art. The ride will also stop at the historic house of Alice Austen and Fort Wadsworth. Staten Island Ferry Terminal timesup.org

MON JUNE 20

1pm • \$5 Suggested
FILM: *YOU CAN'T BE NEUTRAL ON A MOVING TRAIN*. Come watch the autobiographical documentary that follows acclaimed historian Howard Zinn's trajectory from a shipyard organizer to academic rebel. New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W 64th St 212-874-5210 • nysec.org

7pm • Free
PANEL: *DETAINED WITHOUT CAUSE: MUSLIMS' STORIES OF DETENTION AND DEPORTATION IN AMERICA AFTER 9/11*. Irum Sheikh, author of *Detained Without Cause*, an oral history of citizens

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAT JUNE 17, 8:00PM • FREE

PLAY: *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE*. On Wheels Productions presents this classic from Henrik Ibsen. The cast includes David Conklin, Frank Hendricks, Thomas Kane, Katie Labahn, Tony Palmieri, Franco Pistritto, Martina Potratz, Jeffrey A. Wisniewski. Directed by Ted Thompson. Performances will be held June 17,18, 24, 25 at 8 p.m.; June 19, 26 at 7 p.m.

MON JUNE 27 • 7:00 PM

WORKSHOP: INTRODUCTION TO SOUND PAINTING. This workshop will introduce Soundpainting, a multi-disciplinary live composing sign language system, to musicians of all ages and skill levels. The workshop will be led by Eric John Eigner.

TUE JUNE 28, 7:00 PM • \$10

Centric Productions & It Takes a Village Today.com Present PANEL: THE "F" WORD: PART II: FATHERS & FUTURES. How did your father, father figure or the men you were raised around shape you? Panelists include Mo Beasley, Marc Lamont Hill and Angela Jones. Moderated by Esther Armah. Co-sponsored by Centric Productions and It Takes a Village Today.com.

PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE:
brechtforum.org
212-242-4201

THE BRECHT FORUM

BUILDING
A MOVEMENT
THAT MOVES

451 West Street
(btwn Bank and Bethune)



detained in the post-9/11 Islamophobic hysteria, joins attorneys Martin Stolar and Sandra Nichols for a discussion of oppressive law enforcement tactics. Alwan for the Arts, 16 Beaver St 646-251-0402 • alwanforthearts.org

SAT JUNE 25

12-6pm • Free
PARTY: HARLEM PRIDE DAY CELEBRATION. Celebrate the LGBTQ community and their contribution to the rich culture of Harlem. There will be music, dancing, vendors and more. Marcus Garvey Park 347-846-0362 • harlempride.org

1pm • Free
PROTEST: NYC RALLY TO BAN FRACKING. As part of a statewide action against the controversial natural gas extraction process known as fracking, a number of

local organizations are holding a large rally to demand a permanent ban on fracking, the creation of green jobs and the replacement of fossil fuel and nuclear energy production with renewable, clean energy sources. Foley Square 888-552-6570 • nofrackny.org

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE OUR WEEKLY CALENDAR VIA EMAIL AT INDYPENDENT.ORG.

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Bluestockings
172 Allen St.
Housing Works
126 Crosby St.
Hudson Park Branch Library
66 Leroy St.
Mercer St. Books
206 Mercer St.
Whole Earth Bakery
130 St. Marks Place
Brecht Forum
451 West St.
4th Street Food Co-op
58 E. 4th St.
Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

New York Public Library
Epiphany Branch
228 E. 23rd St.
Chelsea Square Restaurant
W. 23rd St. & 9th Ave.
Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.
New York Public Library
Muhlenberg Branch
209 W. 23rd St.
St. Agnes Branch Library
444 Amsterdam Ave.
(btwn W. 81st and 82nd Sts.)
New York Public Library
George Bruce Branch
518 W. 125th St.

Book Culture
526 W. 112th St.
New York Public Library
Harlem Branch
9 W. 124th St.
New York Public Library
Hamilton Grange Branch
503 W. 145th St.
Uptown Sister's Books
W. 156 St. & Amsterdam
Bloomingdale Branch Library
150 W. 100th St.

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.
BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.
Tillie's of Brooklyn
248 DeKalb Ave.

Tea Lounge
Union St. & Seventh Ave.
Video Gallery
310 Seventh Ave.
Ozzie's Coffee Shop
249 5th Ave.
57 Seventh Ave.
Verb Café
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.
Pillow Café
505 Myrtle Ave.
Sisters Community Hardware
900 Fulton St.
Brooklyn Public Library
Pacific Street Branch
25 Fourth Ave.
K-Dog & Dune Buggy
43 Lincoln Rd.
Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.
Blackbird Café
197 Bedford Ave.

'sNice Café
315 Fifth Ave.

Purity Diner
43 Underhill Ave.

Brooklyn Public Library
Bedford Branch
496 Franklin St.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

BRONX

Brook Park
141st St. & Brook Ave.
New York Public Library
Mott Haven Branch
321 E. 140th St.
New York Public Library
Kingsbridge Branch
280 W. 231 St.

STATEN ISLAND
St. George Library
5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Branch Library
75 Bennett St.

Dot Com Cafe
36 Bay St.

Everything Goes Book Café
208 Bay St.

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

Phone: 212-904-1282

E-mail: contact@indypendent.org

Vermont's pioneering healthcare movement

BY ANJA RUDIGER

On May 26, Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin signed a law that creates a path for a universal, publicly financed healthcare system in Vermont, making it the first state in the country to move toward such a system.

Legislators and advocates alike have compared Vermont's role to that of Saskatchewan, which half a century ago spearheaded the establishment of universal healthcare in Canada.

The law states that Vermont will create the publicly financed Green Mountain Care to provide comprehensive coverage as a public good for all Vermont residents, regardless of income, health status or employment.

Yet the struggle for universal healthcare is far from over. Green Mountain Care will be implemented only after a number of conditions are met, including the requirements of the federal health reform law. Some key decisions have been postponed to future legislative sessions, such as a financing mechanism for the system and the design of a health benefits package. The timeline calls for financing proposals by January 2013, a federal waiver application by 2015 – earlier if Congress allows – and implementation by 2017 at the latest.

The pioneering nature of Vermont's health reform was rooted in a people's movement, which caused reform efforts to be driven by principles, rather than political calculation, industry interests, or professional advocates and lobbyists. The vision of healthcare as a human right captured the public imagination and created the political space for action by elected officials. Observers credit this achievement to grassroots organizing by the Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign, led by the Vermont Workers' Center, which engaged thousands of Vermonters in demanding their human right to healthcare.

The campaign built a broad movement guided by principles such as universality and equity, rather than by specific policy proposals like single payer. By shifting the focus from cost containment to collective needs and rights, the campaign placed people at the center of policy and practice. When

viewed as a human right, healthcare becomes a unifying concern for everyone, not just for the uninsured, "consumers" struggling to pay their bills or workers seeking to hold on to benefits.

Embedding human rights principles in public and political discourse has advanced the goal of treating healthcare – and potentially other needs – as a public good, financed through taxation, rather than being purchased as a market commodity.

The success of this organizing model became apparent in the fight against a last-minute amendment to exclude undocumented people from the plan. The campaign mobilized hundreds of Vermonters to stand up for the human rights principle of universality, and after days of phone calls, protests and a large rally, the exclusionary amendment was struck.

If excluding undocumented people presented a clear line in the sand, the maneuvering of private insurance companies has been harder to detect and defeat.

The industry and its corporate allies are a formidable opponent with deep pockets and well-honed patience. Insurance companies, whose business model depends on restricting access to care, managed to keep a foot in the door, as they persuaded legislators to remove a clause prohibiting the sale of private plans in the new public system. Therefore, the most important struggle ahead will be for financing Green Mountain Care as a public good, through equitable contributions from all of Vermont's people and businesses.

Human rights campaigners are prepared to take on corporate forces. While the Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign has not relied on legislation to boost its organizing, it has grown with each legislative success. As people across the country study Vermont's achievement, it may inspire them to help build the movement for healthcare as a human right. Such an impact could rival the significance of the universal healthcare bill itself.

Anja Rudiger is the Human Right to Health Program Director at the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative.



HEALTHCARE: Vermonters win political battle.

FIGHT FOR FAIR RENT

With the June 15 deadline to renew rent stabilization and rent control laws for 2.5 million New Yorkers looming on the horizon, tenant activists are set to head to Albany to make their voices heard.

In addition to a mass mobilization to Albany on June 13, The Real Rent Reform Campaign is prepared to bus tenants up to Albany every day after June 15 if the rent

laws are not renewed. For more information, visit realrentreform.blogspot.com.

The Metropolitan Council on Housing is encouraging New Yorkers to call Gov. Cuomo (212-681-4580) to both renew rent regulation and extend protections to all tenants. Visit metcouncil.net to learn more.

U.S. BOAT TO GAZA



AHOY: *The Audacity of Hope*, the U.S. Boat to Gaza, is set to sail June 25 from Greece in a flotilla with 12 boats from other countries — including Canada, Switzerland and Turkey — to try to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. *The Audacity* will carry some 60 passengers, including retired Army Colonel Ann Wright and the three others pictured above at a May 25 fundraiser in New York City. The boat will also carry messages of solidarity to the people of Gaza. To send your letter on the boat, visit ustogaza.org. **PHOTO:** Ellen Davidson

BROOKLYN BASH UNDER THE STARS



BENEFIT: On June 2 *The Independent* and the Brooklyn Food Coalition (BFC) teamed up for a joint benefit, which was held in Park Slope, Brooklyn at the home of Nancy Romer and Lew Friedman. Jeremy Scahill, the author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, attended the event and spoke to attendees about the importance of media activism and food justice.

Nearly 200 people attended, and guests enjoyed a home-cooked Indian feast, as well as dancing under the stars. Romer, the BFC Founder and General Coordinator, and *Independent* General Manager Arun Gupta said the fundraiser was a success, and both organizations look forward to working together again in the future.

Stay on the look out for future *Independent* benefits and events by visiting indypendent.org.

PHOTO: Lew Friedman

We Are All Spaniards: 'HOSTAGES OF HOSTAGES' NO MORE

By JAMES D. FERNÁNDEZ

On May 15, 2011, Spain exploded into protest. Tens of thousands of people, mainly youth, began occupying public spaces in Madrid and other cities all over Spain, protesting against, among other things, a flawed political system, corrupt government, austerity for people and bailouts for banks.

It's not easy to make sense of the complex processes unleashed on May 15. The mainstream Spanish press seems unable to grasp their significance or has resorted to sensationalism. The movement itself is in movement, in flux. In fact, its mobility and unscripted nature are probably the main sources of its disquieting power.

We would do well to recall that Spain's two major experiments in democracy have been conducted during extremely inauspicious times for democratic movements worldwide.

The country's first sustained attempt at a modern democracy took place from 1931 to 1936, a time of global economic depression and rising totalitarian ideologies on both the left and the right. The short-lived Second Republic made a valiant effort, under adverse

circumstances, to create democratic citizens out of monarchical and even feudal subjects. It began the arduous, and still incomplete, task of separating church and state, implementing land reform and promoting gender equality. But Franco, Hitler and Mussolini snuffed out Spain's democratic spring, aided

by France, England and the United States, the dithering would-be defenders of democracy that in the late 1930s appeased Hitler, while denouncing the "excesses" on the left.

The Republic's valiant struggle against all odds undoubtedly contributed to the way in which the Spanish Civil War — and the

memory of that war — was seared into the consciousness of progressives all over the world, and still remains a point of reference and a reservoir of images of democratic hope and courage for underdogs everywhere.

There was no Youtube in 1936, but there were newsreels; there wasn't Flickr, but there was photo-journalism; there were no Facebook walls or blogs, but there were wall newspapers and posters and pamphlets. All the latest innovations in communication and networking were tapped to mobilize global public opinion in support of the beleaguered Spanish Republic.

The second serious experiment in democracy began after Franco's death in 1975. Spain's transition to democracy has been admirable in many ways, but it has coincided with a dramatic impoverishment of democratic ideals and processes worldwide. Some would even say, though it sounds like a cruel joke, that Spain, whose first bid for democracy was squashed by fascism, has now become a normal democracy, but only at the very time when that concept has been hollowed out of meaning.

Many Spaniards today feel that their country — much like the United States — has settled



'NO HOME, NO JOB, NO PENSION, NO FEAR': Youth Without a Future protest in Madrid on May 15.

THE REAL DEMOCRACY

By TOMÁS HERREROS AND EMMANUEL RODRÍGUEZ

The May 15 Movement marks a turning point from the web to the street, from conversations around the kitchen table to mass mobilizations, from outrage to hope. Tens of thousands responded to a call for real democracy, a democracy no longer tailored to the greed of the few, but to the needs of the people.

Many are outraged by parliamentary politics that make the weakest pay for the crisis. In the last few years we have witnessed big banks receive billions in bail outs, while cuts in social provision, brutal assaults on basic rights and covert privatizations ate away at an already skeletal Spanish welfare state.

This outrage magnified when confronted with the cowardice of politicians. What happened to the promises to give capitalism a human face? What happened to the idea of abolishing corporate tax havens? What of the plans to strictly regulate the financial system, tax speculative gains and stop tax benefits for the richest?

While some may see the May 15 movement as warning to the big unions and major left parties trounced in the May 22 elections, it is much more than that. Sure, there

is general disaffection with the institutional left. The Socialist Party's crushing election losses stem from its inability to move beyond the dominant narrative that a scarcity of resources is at root of current economic woes. Let's be clear: there is no lack of resources. The real problem is the extremely uneven distribution of wealth, and the financial "discipline" of austerity, which is exacerbating the situation.

Where are the huge profits of the real estate bubble? Where are the returns of mega-projects such as useless airports in Castellón, Huesca and Lleida? Who is benefiting from the mountain of debt crippling so many households?

Who can forgive Prime Minister Zapatero when after parliament rejected a proposal to allow people to walk away from worthless mortgages he said it could "jeopardize the solvency of the Spanish financial system"? Was he addressing the millions of people enslaved by their mortgages or the major banks?

What can we say of the law of intellectual property, the infamous *Ley Sinde*? Was he standing with those who have shaped the web or with those who plan to make money out of it, as if culture was just another commodity?

If the institutional left continues to ignore

social movements, if it refuses to break from a script written by the financial and political elites, if it fails to come up with a plan that could lead us out of the crisis, it will lose whatever social legitimacy it still has.

The May 15 Movement reveals that citizens have been able to organize themselves amid a profound crisis of political representation and institutional abandonment. New generations have learned how to shape the web, creating new ways of "being together," and armed with a savvy pragmatism that escapes from preconceived political categories and cumbersome bureaucratic apparatuses.

We are witnessing new "majority minorities" who demand democracy and social rights in the face of a war "of all against all" and the social atomization, privatization and welfare cuts promoted by neoliberalism.

Old political goals may be of little use. Hoping for an impossible return to the fold of the State, or aiming for full employment — like the whole parliamentary left seems to be doing — is pointless. Reinventing democracy requires new ways of distributing wealth, citizenship rights for all regardless of birthplace, the defense of common goods like environmental resources, knowledge, education, the internet and health, and different forms of self-governance that can

transcend the corruption of current ones.

This movement is linked to a wider current of European protests against austerity. These protests defy the image of a silent mass of Europeans, an image that serves the interests of elites. These include campaigns like UK Uncut against Conservative Party policies, mass mobilizations of *Geração a Rasca* in Portugal, general strikes in Greece and France, and what happened in Iceland after the people decided not to bail out the bankers. And, of course, inspiration is found above all in the Arab Spring, the democratic revolts in Egypt and Tunisia that overthrew their corrupt leaders.

We now have at least two routes out of this crisis: implementing yet more cuts or constructing a real democracy. The first has failed to bring back economic "normality"; it has created an atmosphere of "every man for himself," a war of all against all. The second promises an absolute and constituent democracy. It has just started to lay down its path. But this is the path we choose.

Tomás Herreros and Emmanuel Rodríguez are members of Universidad Nomada a collective of autonomous education. Translated by Yaiza Hernández Velázquez.

The Roots of Spain's Revolution

By DICK NICHOLS

into a stagnant and corrupt political system. They believe that the two major parties are virtually indistinguishable on the issues that affect people's lives the most, because both are ruled by the "tyranny of common sense." "Keep the banks, big business and the credit rating agencies happy, by imposing austerity on, and demanding efficiency from, your citizens. Let your citizens vote every once in a while —we are, after all, a democracy—and make sure that they keep consuming. When elections come around, each party should trot out the trusted, old wedge issues, which camouflage the profound similarities between the two parties and focus the attention on largely superficial or symbolic differences. The two political parties must bring out their bases on election day, even if voters have to hold their noses in disgust when they vote. Each party must scare voters into believing that the stench of the other guy is even worse than ours."

A new common sense seems to be emerging in the wake of May 15. Many Spaniards have finally decided to say out loud, in public squares, and virtual spaces that didn't exist 10 years ago, that you are not alone or disloyal if you think that the choices stink, if it looks to you like the emperor has no clothes, if you feel that the demos has been dropped from democracy. The protesters in Spain are wondering aloud why their access to their leaders is limited to casting a ballot once every four years, while banks, business leaders and credit rating agencies seem to have unlimited access.

The protesters are asking the basic questions supposedly left behind in these commonsensical, post-historical, post-ideological times. They are refusing to take the bait of the parties' wedge issues. They are claiming that the two main parties have been taking them for granted, and they are saying to all of this: "*basta ya*." Enough is enough.

If the Spanish government seems like a hostage of "the market," the Spanish people feel subject to a double captivity. They are trapped in an ossified political system whose leaders seem less and less to accountable to their sequestered constituents, and more and more to their own supranational captors: those godlike international financial "markets" that whimsically giveth and taketh away.

Perhaps the screams we are hearing from Spain can best be thought of as the shouts of a hostage's hostage, who is just becoming fully aware of, and indignant about, her double imprisonment. Of course, it is impossible to predict the outcome of the processes set in motion. Maybe things will fizzle out with the heat of July. Or maybe Spain will once again find itself at the forefront in identifying threats and pointing out promise.

Either way, we Americans should heed those calls of the hostage's hostage, try to understand her plight, and check on the health of our own democracy, and on the status of our own freedoms. We might discover, to our own surprise, that we are all Spaniards.

James D. Fernández is Associate Professor of Spanish Literature and Culture at New York University.

In late April, the progressive Spanish daily *Publico* asked why there was so little resistance to the economic crisis, despite 5 million jobless and rising misery.

The union and social movement leaders and left academics interviewed pointed to the numbing impact of mass unemployment, the casualization of work, the bureaucratization of organized labor, widespread skepticism that striking could achieve anything and the economic cushion provided by Spain's extended families.

They also cited the apparent failure of French and Greek general strikes against austerity. The consensus was that, given the absence in Europe of even one successful struggle, people in Spain were resigned to battling their way through the crisis as best they could.

Just over one month later, camps of thousands of *los indignados* ("the outraged") are pitched in the squares of at least 80 Spanish cities and towns.

The eyes of the world are on Madrid's Puerta del Sol and Barcelona's Plaza Catalunya, where the occupiers are denouncing pro-corporate austerity, political corruption and demanding a "new system."

How did it come about? It is not for lack of anger.

In January, the leaders of the two major union confederations — the Workers Commissions (CC.OO.) and General Union of Workers (UGT) — agreed to a rise in the retirement age and a "social accord" with the national government and the employers. The unions led a general strike last Sept. 29. But once this deal was done, nothing more could be expected of them — any resistance would have to come from elsewhere.

Polls showed 70 to 75 percent of Spaniards opposed the moves. Similar majorities have opposed bank bailouts, the forced restructuring of the credit unions and cuts to the welfare system.

The signs of a fight back emerged in early 2011 among young people in Spain, one of the most internet-savvy groups in Europe.

In February, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero introduced Europe's toughest law against illegal internet downloads — with the support of the main conservative parties, the Popular Party (PP) and the Catalan Convergence and Union (CiU).

In reaction, the website "Don't Vote for Them" was launched against the PSOE, PP and CiU — becoming the hot site in Spanish cyberspace. "Don't Vote for Them" also posted a devastating Googlemaps corruption guide to Spain.

In January, another activist website appeared, "Franco Did Not Die," in reference to Spain's fascist dictator who died in 1975. Its initial purpose was to raise funds in support of Judge Baltasar Garzón, who was suspended in May 2010 after investigating the crimes of Franco's regime too enthusiastically, but the campaign broadened into a movement against political manipulation of the judiciary.

The site "State of Malaise," dedicated to bringing democracy and transparency into political life, began calling for weekly Friday protests across the country.

Hundreds were expected; about 5,000 showed up, encouraging organizers to call another protest on May 15. This call was supported by the Real Democracy Now! group. This slogan captured the widespread conviction that no matter how the people vote, bankers get richer, politicians do their bidding and life gets worse.

This rejection of institutional politics was expressed in the now-famous saying: "We are not merchandise in the hands of bankers and politicians."

About 50,000 turned out across Spain on May 15 — giving birth to the "May 15 Movement."

The first encampment took place that day in Madrid's central plaza, Puerta del Sol. Police attempts to close it down were defeated by the thousands pouring into the site after appeals on Facebook and Twitter.



DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: A popular assembly takes place in Madrid's Puerta del Sol on May 29.

"Acuable.es", the main online petitioning site, combined with global site Avaaz to launch a campaign against candidates charged with corruption running in the May 22 local government elections.

The growing mood of defiance was shown by the success of the short essay "Get Outraged" by 93-year-old French Resistance veteran Stephane Hessel. This call to arms against the destruction of the European welfare state and democratic rights is one of the hottest books in Spain.

The trigger that brought these cyber-protests onto the streets came from neighboring Portugal. On March 15, a 300,000-strong protest was held in Lisbon by the "generation on the scrapheap," a "non-party political" outpouring of young people demanding a future.

On April 7, the newly formed Spanish "Youth Without a Future" collective called a demonstration under the slogan "without work, without house, without pension, without fear."

The Madrid camp was reproduced across Spain, showing people wanted to do more than march and go home. The camps have become the centers of an ongoing teach-in, of what one activist has called "a continuous exercise in liberation."

They have given heart to millions of working people who share the campers hatred for "the politicians," and who cheered on May 27 as police attempts to close down the camp in Barcelona's Plaza Catalunya were humiliatingly defeated by sheer force of numbers.

Whatever happens next, the May 15 Movement has won a huge victory. Resistance is possible, it can win, and with greater organization and participation it will win more.

Reprinted from Green Left Weekly.

The Global Nuclear Regime

By SABU KOHSO

Three months after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters that struck on March 11, Japan has plunged from an advanced and well-managed consumerist society to an epicenter of planetary radiation and imploding social and bureaucratic apparatuses. While the Japanese government is desperately attempting to maintain its sovereignty, it is unable to solve the amassing problems. In the broad picture, the national territory is being divided up into enclaves of inaccessible regions and the national economy is sinking into the abyss.

Since the 1970s, Japan's technology, along with its society and bureaucracy, established a model for innovation. The international business community and conservative forces alike praised Japan for efficiency and good management. The events of 3/11, as the disaster is now known, revealed both the immense problems inherent in nuclear power and the failings of the bureaucratic system, technology and civil society that make up the apparatus called Japan, a pinnacle of modern industrial civilization.

One result appears to be the formation of a "global nuclear regime." Capitalism has no intention of abolishing nuclear power. Instead, it is re-organizing the technocracy to manage it primarily by managing nuclear disaster, forcing people to live with different forms and degrees of radiation. The management of nuclear disaster may develop into a strategy for profit making, rule and control. *Nature* estimates the clean up may take a century, and the Japan Center for Economic Research puts the costs over the next 10 years at \$71 to \$250 billion. Japan's government will likely assume the liabilities of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), meaning the public will pay. Those funds will flow to corporations, while capital will pressure the government in coming years to make the huge swaths of land now rendered inhospitable available for profit-making enterprises.

Fukushima is a new form of nuclear war, no longer being fought between the states, but between the global nuclear regime and all life forms including humans. The first rescue units and corporations that showed interest in Fukushima were from the United States, France and Israel. Leading developers both of nuclear weapons and energy, these nations are in a position to play a central role in a global nuclear regime. Some of the first clean-up contracts have already gone to firms in California and France.

People in stricken areas such as Fukushima prefecture, location of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear energy plant where the reactors melted down, continue to suffer from physical devastation and intense radiation. Some 140 miles away to the south, the 13 million residents of metropolitan Tokyo are enveloped in an invisible cloud of low-level radiation.

MELTDOWNS

We know now that three of the plant's six reactors experienced complete meltdowns a few days after 3/11. Reactor 1 began melt-

Is Fukushima an ecological disaster? It is a natural and man-made disaster. It is a disaster caused by capitalism. But all in all, it is the self-destruction of the whole of the systems run by capitalism, the nation and the state.

ONE EVENT

While the democratic uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa may seem unrelated to Fukushima, revolution and disaster are connected. The Arab Spring and 3/11 may be rooted in different modes of being and subjective identities and relations, but they both derive from the same system of capitalist expropriation and in turn represent an unprecedented threat to capitalism. Revolution and disaster together are forcing the planetary apparatus to undo and redo itself. In this sense, they are "One Event" in the ultimate dimension, the dimension where the world and the earth clash and interact.

The events of 3/11 expose the fundamental paradox of human laws regarding nature. The well-being of humans depends upon the well-being of nature. But the law assumes nature is a mere object, mere resources to exploit. Laws are designed to expropriate, privatize and divide the ultimate commons called the earth. If we think about the rights of mother earth we must accept limiting the unilateral rights of humanity.

Fukushima 3/11 has unveiled the discrepancy between the world and the earth. The world is the stage where human societies play out the drama of their interactions with structural languages such as international politics and laws. The earth is the factory that produces and reproduces the players and the stage themselves but by using different languages that are machinic (in the words of Felix Guattari). The machinic operates differently from the structural in that it penetrates through and moves between the conscious and the unconscious in the planetary whole.

In this sense, Fukushima 3/11 is not associated with "the world." The event radically questions the concepts associated with the global governance such as G20, the United Nations or Empire, mainly consisting of the representatives of nation-states and capital. These representatives cannot embody a will to solution but only to manage the problems of all the discrepancies between humanity and nature, the world and the earth.

The nature of the event lies on the level of the unconscious called the earth, upon which the apparatus is built and we live



Nuclear Age: One goal of a "global nuclear regime" would be to make people accept different levels and types of radiation.

ing down five hours after the earthquake, which, contrary to official reports, caused the reactor's cooling system to fail, not the subsequent tsunami. The breadth of the cover-up by the government and the quasi-public TEPCO, compounded by the fact most corporate media outlets downplayed the dangers, is evidence of a general disregard for the health and safety of Japan's population as well as the rest of humanity who will be exposed to the radiation sooner or later. The cover-ups, similar to the official white-wash of the health dangers to New York City residents following the months-long toxic fire after the 9/11 attacks, shows the overriding concern is to maintain business activity at all costs.

WHY THE JAPANESE DON'T TRUST THEIR GOVERNMENT

By HARRY HAROOTUNIAN

Natural disasters in Japan — drought, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and the appearance of foreigners — used to be interpreted as signs of moral failure in the leadership of the nation. The social order was aligned with nature, so any divergence between national order and nature seemed to denote a moral failure that might lead to worse catastrophes.

After Japan's March 11 earthquake and tsunami, an elderly Tokyo resident said: "When a country's leaders are bad, natural disasters occur." A similar thought also seems to have crossed the minds of some in power in Japan. A post-disaster speech made by the prime minister Kan Naoto alluded to the devastation of the country at the end of the second world war, the 1923 Tokyo earthquake, and the 1995 Kobe earthquake.

The governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, blurted out that the earthquake and tsunami were "divine retribution" (*tenbatsu*) for Japan's selfishness, materialism and the worship of money, a warning to amend this wayward lifestyle and return to the correct path. The 1923 Kanto earthquake had been viewed the same way, and Emperor Hirohito wrote in 1946, when threatened with being tried as a war criminal, that the recent war had been caused by the moral laxity of the people, seduced by materialism and consumerism.

Ishihara conveniently shifted responsibility from the political leadership to the people, a callous response to such vast human suffering — the untold dead, more than 400,000 homeless, damage to property and infrastructure, and then the fear of radioactive emissions. Perhaps more frightening, though, was the response, in both actions and presentation, of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), to what happened at its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, where the earthquake and tsunami had put out of commission both sets of fail-safe equipment for reactors and storage pools for spent nuclear rods, leading to the release of radiation into the atmosphere and evacuations from the surrounding area.

The head of TEPCO broke down in tears during a televised address to the nation. On behalf of TEPCO, he offered profuse, traditional-style apologies — and inadvertently suggested that the company was not at all sure about its actions. It has since been claimed that although TEPCO's executives knew exactly what should have been done in the emergency, they took too much time to decide when to begin cooling down the reactors because they did not want to ruin them. The government then put TEPCO in charge of running electricity blackouts across Japan, meant to conserve power for essential services, allowing for reduced generation capacity and a damaged grid. The unstated cozy relationship between state and business, which consumer groups had long questioned, was suddenly made clear.

Both state and company have a well-documented history of denials of actual nuclear accidents or the very high potential, given Japan's tectonics, for such accidents. In 2007, an earthquake in northwest Japan of far less magnitude (6.8 against the almost unprecedented 9.0) damaged the TEPCO nuclear facility at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa but not critically — luckily, for it had not been designed to withstand a quake even of that smaller size.

Northeast Japan had remained, since the

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Fukushima's 'Zones of Sacrifice'

19th century, less developed than Tokyo and central and western Japan. The decision by the government and TEPCO to site nuclear energy facilities on its coast was partly an attempt to generate economic growth and prevent the southward migration of the population.

The local economy has been devastated, and the displaced and homeless appear to be very conscious they have been left alone to cope, almost unsupported by the government: Food, fuel, water, shelter arrived (where they arrived) only very slowly. They remember the government's ineptitude after the Kobe earthquake in 1995, when it took days even to recognize the severity of the damage and organize any relief. While initial news reports focused on the immediate needs of evacuees, for most Japanese the ongoing threat of radioactive contamination is the greater concern. It also threatens the political system dominated by a single party that has presided over them for 60 years, where electoral swings have led to changes of government but not of policy.

Since WWII, the Japanese have been disciplined into a society that emphasizes hard work, uncomplaining sacrifice, conformism, steadfastness, loyalty and acceptance. Paradoxically, this has produced indifference to an unresponsive political class, and profound distrust and criticism of its leadership.

The emperor called on the people to remain calm and hopeful and take care of each other, and reminded them of a similar broadcast by his father Hirohito in 1945 that announced the end of the war, asking the nation to "endure the unendurable."

Akihito does not claim divinity (Hirohito renounced that) but only the status of a national symbol, and this appeal consolidated the government's request that people should remain patient, and make more sacrifices. Using the emperor in this way reinforces Ishihara's statement and suggests an attempt to shift the responsibility from the government to the people. Most Japanese would say the imperial institution is not important, yet the fact that the government summoned the emperor to make the speech revealed that in fact it is. Few Japanese question the symbolic status of the emperor.

The emperor embodies the nation and is therefore in a position to ask people to accept the existing political arrangements (going against the constitution, which says that the people are sovereign). The idea is to transfer the Japanese people's loyalties towards their social (and ethnic) community onto the state and the form of political rule that has been constructed to control them.

The government called the emperor in as damage control, an attempt to calm a mistrustful population and to protect the present system of authority. But the clear failure of the government to act decisively and give prompt and accurate information and aid, risks damaging the carefully constructed identification between popular sovereignty and political leadership in Japan. This threatens to undermine any chance of managing the difficult task of recovery that lies ahead.

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BY WENDY MATSUMURA

In the 2008 edition of his book *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, Neil Smith might have been writing about Japan and its ongoing nuclear crisis in the following passage: "while many states have variously unhitched themselves from responsibility for the social reproduction of their national populations, they have selectively rendered the state apparatus as its own entrepreneurial entity, a purer catalyst of capitalist expansion than ever before."

The nuclear meltdowns that began with the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami on March 11 have highlighted the Japanese government's role in brokering nuclear technology contracts, uranium mining deals, and massive subsidies for its utilities and other nuclear energy-related corporations despite its desperate attempts to render such ties invisible.

This relationship has been reinforced by government statements that it will most likely have to "join TEPCO in ensuring that responsibilities [compensation] are fulfilled." Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano stated "it is also the government's responsibility to ensure that all the people who have been affected are provided with appropriate indemnity for their losses."

The crisis that hit the Tohoku region, Japan's underdeveloped northeast that includes Fukushima prefecture, is a reminder

of the economic role unproductive spaces play. These spaces fit into the framework of overdevelopment and underdevelopment of physical space that is central to the capitalist economy. Tohoku itself is a product of the back-and-forth flows between fixed capital, the built environment of roads, ports, factories, energy facilities, and government services, and mobile capital. Tohoku is also affected by the related cultural construction of the region as a backwater, which began in the mid-19th century and continues to the present.

These unproductive spaces, which Valerie Kuletz terms "zones of sacrifice" in her book, *Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*, often overlap with other spaces — rural spaces or newly built industrial-scientific complexes — that serve to resolve energy crises caused by cities through building nuclear and other power plants.

Kuletz writes that these zones are "desirable because of their undesirability." They will remain central to the global landscape until the disposal of industrial waste is resolved. They are desirable for their function of capital accumulation, but at the cost of inflicting violence upon peoples who inhabit the zones.

Tainted Desert is a powerful and heart-breaking analysis of the intentional ruin of Native American reservations in the West by the nuclear industry, the U.S. government, the military and scientific establishment

since the 1940s. Kuletz proposes "nuclearism" as a form of internal colonialism that feeds off and exacerbates political and economic inequalities between regions — geographical, cultural and racial/ethnic — within a given society.

Nuclearism relies on a practice of deterritoriality — the indifference by modern nation-states and the international community toward particular lands or regions and populations that inhabit them.

Zones of sacrifice are pieces in the global puzzle of energy exploitation. They link areas like Nevada's Yucca Mountain, an unfinished "permanent" nuclear waste disposal site, to uranium mines in indigenous lands in Northern Saskatchewan, Western Australia, Namibia, Niger and Gabon. The zones include Kazakhstan, "an engine of global uranium production" in the words of one analyst and targeted by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry as a new source of uranium; Rokkasho village in Aomori prefecture, Japan's own nuclear reprocessing site; Tsuruga city in Fukui prefecture, which houses Japan's only operational fast breeder reactor; England's Sellafield nuclear reprocessing complex, which reprocesses Japanese reactors' spent nuclear fuel; and the U.S. military's Cold War-era nuclear weapons facility in Hanford, Washington.

These sites are where raw material extraction, waste disposal, nuclear testing and radioactive contamination tend to occur. For communities in these areas, workers often have no other option than to toil in these health-sapping industries, and everyone is forced to live in the toxic spaces. Within these landscapes multinational corporations engage in "co-siting," which means housing many dangerous facilities together because, as Colin Macilwain recently reported in *Nature*, "the only communities that will accept new nuclear plants are those that already have them." Powerful government agencies like the U.S. Department of Energy, the Pentagon and the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry serve as defender and benefactor to the corporations, helping secure local permission to build the facilities and providing massive subsidies to municipalities and contracts to companies in order to realize these locally undesirable but nationally "necessary" projects. (Macilwain lays bare the absurdity of co-siting: "Not only are all the reactors exposed simultaneously to the same dangers — whether flood, earthquake, war or terrorist attack — but radiation release at one reactor or fuel tank could cripple recovery efforts at the others.")

"Zones of sacrifice" rely on vague rhetoric about shared sacrifice that obscure the vested interests that benefit from establishing these spaces while rendering invisible the concrete sacrifices forced upon humans and non-humans occupying those lands. In the process, these regions-turned-wastelands are sacrificed for the broader requirements of national security, international stability and the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The lands may be rendered uninhabitable, but their value to the nation-state, industry and science are great.

Another characteristic of the zones of sacrifice is that despite the site-specific nature of nuclear power plants and waste facilities, nuclear pollution permeates boundaries — even as boundaries are extremely useful for doling out subsidies and compensation and

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How to Green the Planet

By Chris Williams

For nearly 40 years, since the first oil shock in 1973, the dream of a planet powered by clean, renewable energy has seemed just on the horizon.

Soaring wind turbines scooping up air, regiments of solar panels drinking in sunshine, schools of wave generators bobbing in oceans, sleek geothermal plants tapping terrestrial heat: these are the building blocks for constructing a society where all people can enjoy the benefits of modernity while preserving the sanctity of nature.

Nowadays, this dream seems more distant than ever in a world where undersea volcanoes spew millions of barrels of oil, coal fires choke the skies and 5,000-degree puddles of molten uranium poison the land, air and water.

Perhaps the critics are right in dismissing renewable energy as mere fantasy. It must be true that wind, solar and geothermal energy sources are simply too scattered, too expensive and too intermittent to replace our hydrocarbon economy.

Can solar panels in the Southwest really power factories in the Midwest and tens of millions of homes and businesses on the coasts? Won't we need so many windmills that metallic giants will colonize every peak and plain? And what happens when the sun goes down at night or the wind stops blowing – won't we still need a robust back-up system based on the same dirty coal, oil and uranium we are trying to supplant?

It may seem hard to believe, but it is fully within our means today to make the alternative energy dream a green reality. All the technologies exist. The engineering is relatively straightforward, especially when compared to the epic size of our oil-powered, automobile-based societies. The need is obvious. Unless we want to consign humanity to a broiling, toxic swamp called earth, alternative energy is an imperative.

The tricky part, however, is society and politics. How our society and economy is organized; how wealth and resources are generated and distributed; which institutions have a vested interest in the status quo; and how to create radically different forms of decision making are the major obstacles to greening the global economy.

The first question is, are there even enough alternative sources of energy to harvest? Different studies provide the answer.

Last August, *Science Magazine* reported that 101,000 terawatts of solar energy strikes the ground each year. This compares to annual global energy consumption of 15 terawatts for everything: heating, electricity and transport. (One terawatt is a million megawatts, roughly equivalent to the output of 1,200 nuclear power reactors.) Therefore,

we only have to capture a little more than 1/10,000th of incoming solar radiation to satisfy all of humanity's energy needs.

Wind energy is not so abundant, but still plentiful. A recent report by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory put the total wind energy available in the United States was 37,000,000 gigawatt-hours of electricity, which is 12 times the demand. A 2005 study by Stanford University researchers found worldwide 72 terawatts of "sustainable class 3 winds," meaning they are highly efficient for generating electricity. This estimate

was generated via fossil fuels and nuclear power. The construction of 3.8 million wind turbines might sound like a lot over a 20-year period but as 70 million cars are manufactured every year, it is very feasible.

Clearly, the amount of energy available from solar, wind and geothermal sources, even without adding in tidal and wave energy, dwarfs current and foreseeable demand.

Now, there are two common arguments against supplying all of our energy from renewable sources.

power, without even including all the waste dumps and poisoned lands.

INTERMITTENCY

The second argument against renewables is because the sun and wind are somewhat unpredictable, we need carbon-based or nuclear power systems to smooth out fluctuations in supply or to account for demand spikes. Built in redundancy to account for this problem is prohibitive in terms of cost, land and resource use.

The intermittency problem can be solved with a mix of renewables. First, wind and solar energy complement one another: wind is more prevalent and predictable at night, while solar is obviously limited to the day. Geothermal energy is highly predictable, as is tidal and wave-based energy. Second, if the mix of renewables is spread geographically, then there is a high probability that energy will be reliably available.

Third, to iron out any spikes, an electrical system based on renewable energy would require storage rather than redundancy – which in any case is already required with fossil fuel and nuclear plants. There are a number of proven technologies that can be used to store electricity. Solar energy can be stored for nighttime use by heating up salts during the day. And solar or wind power can be stored by compressing air, pumping water uphill, or by employing flywheels.

CLEAN ENERGY HIGHWAY

To make this system viable electricity grids must be upgraded. In the United States, the antiquated grid is a hodgepodge of three semi-autonomous regions with little interconnectivity and a morass of smaller lines zigzagging haphazardly across states. These grids are prone to costly accidents, power shortages and blackouts. High voltage power lines take up less land than those currently in use and are more efficient. Incorporating some high-voltage direct current lines – which lose far less electricity in long-distance transmission than alternating current lines – would also reduce energy usage.

Such a project would require federal intervention. However, when one looks at the interstate highway system – a huge subsidy to the auto industry – building a national super highway for clean-energy electrons is hardly unprecedented.

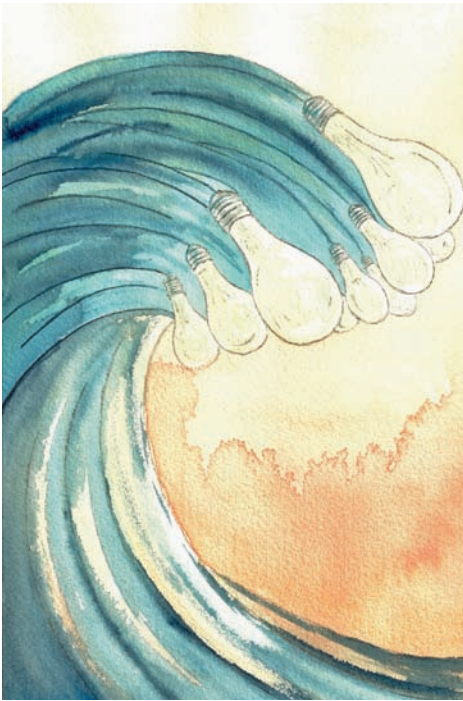
A 2009 publication, "Energy Self-Reliant States," found that 30 states could be entirely self-sufficient in energy without requiring long-distance power transmission. Therefore, a mix of decentralized and centralized energy is entirely possible.

Other advantages of renewable energy over fossil fuels and nuclear power include greatly reducing the possibility of breathing poisoned air, drinking polluted water and living on an irradiated and dying planet.

Also, contrary to prevailing belief, wind turbines and solar photovoltaic panels require far less downtime for maintenance than fossil-fuel or nuclear power plants. As renewables are dispersed by nature and most will not be grouped in massive gigawatt-sized plants, taking turbines or solar panels offline is much less disruptive than shutting down just one large coal-fired power plant. Out of the more than 1,000 wind turbines

operating in Japan, only one was damaged by the earthquake and ensuing tsunami. Therefore, resilience to natural disasters is another bonus of renewable energy sources.

One of the most intriguing benefits of renewable energies is that energy consumption would drop dramatically. According to *Scientific American*, "electrification is a more efficient way to use energy. For example, only 17 to 20 percent of the energy in gasoline is used to move a vehicle (the rest is wasted as heat), whereas 75 to 86 percent of the electricity delivered to an electric vehicle goes into motion."



THE COST OF SUBSIDIES

Perhaps the most-common argument leveled against renewable is its expense. Nuclear-power proponents claim it is the cheapest form of energy per kilowatt-hour, less expensive than coal, oil or wind. This is true, if one ignores decommissioning costs for hundreds of nuclear reactors, the hundreds of billions of dollars that it will cost to handle the Fukushima disaster over the next 100 years, lands devastated by uranium mining, at least 150,000 deaths from the 1986 meltdown at Chernobyl, and tens of thousands of years of continuing poisoning from highly radioactive waste that no one has a clue what to do with. Wind is already cheaper than natural gas and coal, with almost none of the environmental drawbacks from mining and fracking to acid rain and climate change.

According to the winter 2011 issue of *Good* magazine, U.S. government subsidies to the fossil fuel industry in the form of tax breaks and direct spending totaled \$70.2 billion from 2002 to 2008. Corn-based ethanol received \$16.8 billion more while all other renewable technologies received only \$12.2 billion.

Globally, price and production incentives for fossil fuels was an eye-popping \$650 billion in 2008; this for the most profitable industry on the planet. Exxon Mobil alone reaped \$30.5 billion in profit for 2010.

As for investments in green energy, last year the United States spent \$18 billion

while China allocated \$34 billion. China and South Korea far exceed the United States in the manufacture and production of green technology and will move further ahead over the next several years as public funding increases.

THE DINOSAURS THAT WON'T DIE

Wind energy is now so plentiful and inexpensive that U.S. utility companies are trying to squelch the wind industry.

According to a March 2010 account by environmental reporter Peter Behr, "A group of mostly East Coast utility companies calling itself the Coalition for Fair Transmission Policy fears that the prime conditions in the Great Plains will make the region's wind power too cheap for its members to compete with, unless developers there are made to pay the costs of moving wind power eastward." Along with natural gas producers, the utilities want wind developers to pay for back-up generators, penalties if they don't deliver energy as scheduled, and want the government to deny them subsidies.

Another case of the fossil-fuel industry trying to kill renewable energy is occurring in Ontario, which has undertaken highly successful measures to support its renewable energy sector. The Canadian province is being sued for unfair trade practices by the United States, Japan and the European Union. Since 2003, coal use in Ontario has dropped 70 percent as 8,000 megawatts of clean energy have come on line. Its plan is to replace coal with renewable sources by 2014. Because the provincial government has enacted tariffs to guarantee prices for wind and solar energy as well as domestic manufacturing requirements – similar to "Buy American" laws – competing nations claim it is unfair competition.

A simple way to address the issue of energy consumption is through enacting efficiency regulations for appliances and retrofitting housing stock. As one example, U.S. regulations for new refrigerators, dishwashers and washing machines have led to the manufacturing of appliances that use 80 to 90 percent less electricity than old devices. A counter-example is provided by televisions. After vociferous lobbying by the electronics industry to block efficiency regulation, electricity consumption by televisions has soared because designers haven't been pushed to reduce energy use.

In terms of transport, we need to move from single-passenger vehicles and airplanes to a mix of bicycles, buses, subways, and light and high-speed rail. Bus systems, such as pioneered in Curitiba, Brazil, show how to move huge numbers of people around a city quickly, at low cost and with minimal energy usage. In terms of high-speed rail, China's network didn't exist prior to 2008; in two years it will have more miles of high-speed rail than the rest of the world combined.

SOCIAL POWER

It is clear from all the studies and possibilities – as well as nearly two decades of delays and sabotage of international treaties to address climate change – that the central problem is the political priorities of the social and economic regime of Capital. This point was



WIND AND WAVE, SOLAR AND GEO

By Chris Williams

The main advantages of wind, wave, tidal, solar and geothermal energy are they are practically limitless, free once constructed, and they don't emit greenhouse gases or radiation, destabilize the climate, cause respiratory ailments or cancer, contaminate water, or leave behind spills or toxic waste.

The main drawback is high up-front costs. Building a new energy infrastructure requires a new and more efficient electrical grid and a shift from private to public transport. And at least during the build-out phase, there would be a rise in energy usage.

Wind is the most advanced and least expensive renewable energy, but some people claim towering turbines are eyesores and complain about noise pollution from the whooshing blades. However, turbines are downright pleasing compared to giant high-voltage electrical pylons. Offshore wind is more expensive but it would be competitive if it received a fraction of the subsidies lavished on fossil fuels and nuclear power.

Concentrated solar power (CSP) uses hundreds of mirrors to focus the sun on a central tower. Water inside is boiled to create superheated steam that turns a turbine connected to a generator. Turning mechanical energy into electricity is how all thermal plants – coal, oil, natural gas, biomass and uranium – operate. The difference is the fuel is sunshine, not mined, drilled or extracted from the earth.

Constructed of semi-conductor material, photovoltaic cells (PV) turn sunlight directly into electricity. CSP is cheaper than photovoltaic and takes up less land, but like other thermal plants it uses large amounts of water. PV cells are expensive compared to other forms of energy, but prices are dropping rapidly. In a recent interview with Bloomberg News, Mark Little, global research director for General Electric, projected that thin film PV cells would be cost competitive with fossil fuels in five years.

Geothermal plants sink pipes up to three miles below the surface to siphon heat. Iceland already obtains over 30 percent of its energy from geothermal sources. The United States has abundant geothermal potential in the West. One disadvantage is that heat cannot be withdrawn faster than it can regenerate. Also, geothermal plants in California and Switzerland have been implicated in earthquakes.

Tidal power takes advantage of the moon's rotation around the earth, producing very predictable energy. The largest one in the world at Rance, France, has been operating since 1966. However, one proposed for the River Severn estuary that straddles England and Wales has encountered environmental and cost problems. Tidal plants also only produce electricity while tides are flowing – about 10 hours per day.

Underwater turbines are more expensive and need more research and development, as does wave power, which relies on long snakes of turbines rocking back and forth to extract energy from wave motion.

Chris Williams is a professor of physics and chemistry at Pace University and author of Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis.

Illustrations on page 9 by Jessica Patrick, jesspatrick.com.

BY HENRICK IBSEN

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(IBSEN, LETTER TO BRANDES, 1871)

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Global Nuclear

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everyday life without thinking. The unconscious earth surfaced in the conscious world in the form of natural disaster and began to open fissures in the apparatus that had been expanding larger and larger, and embedded deeper and deeper into the planetary body, becoming one with it. The implosion of the apparatus took place at the forefront of the merger where the language of the planetary unconscious is now shaking everything about being human, its being, subjectivity, society, history and the world.

There are the stirrings of a global movement to oust capitalism, the nation and the state, to undo the apparatus, but we are also headed toward collective suicide in a world whose immiseration and oppression are getting steadily worsening in the post-3/11 climate.

Fukushima

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for assigning responsibility for crisis management.

In post-3/11 Japan, this permeability, real and imagined, is destabilizing and anxiety-inducing for communities living in or near designated zones. Thus, the zones provide a stability that does not reflect the reality of radioactive fallout. Prime Minister Naoto Kan's establishment of zones of radioactivity from ground zero to the three-kilometer absolutely no-reentry zone, the broader 20-kilometer danger zone where one-time supervised reentry is permitted, the 30-kilometer zone where residents are strongly advised to stay indoors and "always be prepared for an emergency situation," and the six-prefecture Tohoku region as a whole (of which the cities of Miyagi and Iwate incurred much greater casualties and damages than Fukushima) are administratively useful and easily mapped. But they cannot account for shifting patterns of fallout.

Of the 20-kilometer zone in Fukushima prefecture that includes Futaba, Okuma and Tomioka cities and six other municipalities, the three-kilometer ring around the Daiichi plant will likely not be actively redeveloped by the state. This is a "zone of sacrifice."

The three-kilometer zone may no longer available as a space in which capital accumulation can take place, but what of the wider 20-kilometer zone: will it, threat of radiation and all, be converted into territory available for capital, which untiringly seeks to manage crises of over-accumulation of capital by re-organizing space? What about the space around Japan's 54 nuclear power plants, many of them located in areas vulnerable to hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes, especially if Japan turns away from nuclear energy? What implications does this crisis have on the ability of mobile capital to settle on new sites? And if Japan's government eventually resuscitates nuclear power, what will happen to these communities that host these facilities now revealed to be current or eventual nuclear wastelands?

If such a movement is coming, an ultimate class struggle between the global nuclear regime and the living beings — it will have to be fought within world politics to a large extent. Its real and potential battleground will be the planetary unconscious or the ultimate commons called the earth, the nurturing mother and the goddess of wrath at the same time. The struggle will be unprecedented. The forms it takes are yet to be discovered. The only certainty is that it will involve not only the negotiation processes called politics, but also everything about our minds, society and ecology.

Sabu Kohso is an independent writer and translator of Japanese origin, living in New York City. He is currently working on a blog ifissures.org in the wake of 3/11.

For the nuclear industry, a shrinking terrain upon which capital can deterritorialize and reterritorialize is a limited obstacle. That area is by no means unprofitable in the short term. Nuclear-energy companies have organized themselves into three multinational conglomerates: Toshiba-Westinghouse, Hitachi-GE and Mitsubishi-Areva. They control 90 percent of the global nuclear industry from uranium mining to plant construction, and they have quickly regrouped after 3/11 to devote their profit-making energies to the inevitable stage of all nuclear power plant construction, the decommissioning process.

While the Tokyo Electric Power Company may find it hard to recover from this crisis — it will have to shell out tens of billions of dollars for decommissioning and compensation to victims, unless the public is forced to pick up the tab — at least one of the nuclear giants will prosper. Each one has already submitted proposals for decommissioning. Included in these plans are Fluor and the Shaw Group, two well-known profiteers of disaster capitalism in Iraq and the Gulf Coast. It would be ironic if either Toshiba or Hitachi receives this decommissioning contract, as both were involved in the development and supply of the reactors that are at the root of the nuclear crisis today.

Anti-capitalist struggles brought forth or revitalized by this current crisis requires a recognition of the key role that these multinationals have played in producing the nuclear crisis in Japan, and will play in the post-3/11 reconstruction process in Fukushima and beyond. Their strategies of capital accumulation by dispossession may have destroyed the concrete spaces from which struggles tend to emerge, but has at the same time, produced a common starting point for resistance.

Wendy Matsumura is an assistant professor of History at Furman University.

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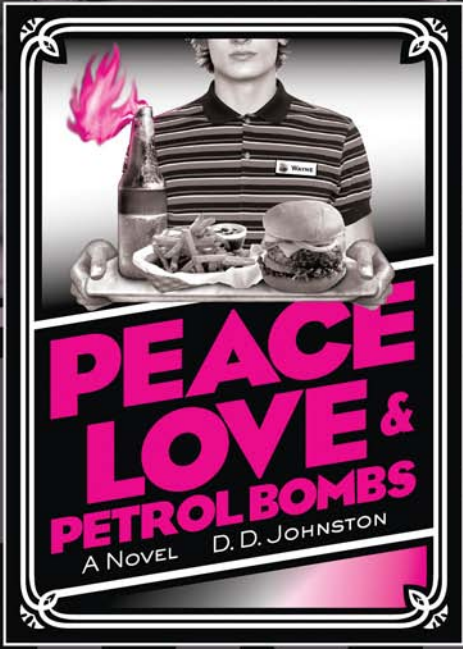
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Life Under Feudalism

Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy
ROSS PERLIN
VERSO, 2011

About five years ago, when I'd just graduated from college and was crashing on friends' couches, I found myself filling out an online loan application. At the time, I let everyone who asked know that I was a photographer, and was working at an exciting start-up photo agency in west Chelsea (I neglected to add, "for free.") My actual occupation, as evidenced by the applications I filled out for apartments or for Medicaid, was "waitress."

to students, but, exempt from the minimum wage, they aren't employees, either. Harassment suits filed by interns against former employers have been thrown out of courts throughout the country, including New York, Massachusetts and California, setting a dangerous legal precedent.

Besides their ubiquity, the most salient quality of internships is their very undefinability. Despite the internship explosion of the past two decades — which grew out of the highly-regulated field of medical internships — the Department of Labor doesn't define or even track internships, which means statistics are nearly impossible to find. Internships, which are now a crucial part of white-collar industries, are similar to



Online banking, however, gave me another option. The drop-down menu next to the required question of employment status, included "employed full-time," "employed part-time" and "intern."

Intern? ING Direct was going to offer me large sums of money with "intern" as assurance?

Really?

The acceptance of unpaid labor as a norm by a global financial institution, not just peers and professors, in 2006, should have been a signal to me of just how deeply entrenched this phenomenon has become. The internship explosion has largely gone unexamined, however: it's only five years later that we see the first mass-market book on the subject. Ross Perlin's *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* investigates the depths of this phenomenon. A masterful exposé blending reporting and analysis, *Intern Nation* shows that internships are far more degrading and widespread than many of us thought they were — and it's in employers' best interest to keep them that way.

First, let's dispense with the obvious: interns are the lowest of the low in the workplace. And to add insult to injury, while interns can shoulder a workload similar to that of an actual employee, they receive none of the commensurate protections or benefits. In Perlin's paraphrase of the law on this issue, whether an intern is paid or not, she is a "stranger who happens to be in an office." Interns who receive college credit rather than money fall into an even grayer area. While they're off campus, they aren't entitled to legal protections afforded


abstract art: If an employer calls something an internship, and a student calls something an internship, who's to say otherwise?

Perlin highlights some eye-opening numbers. More than half of current college graduates have been interns at some point in their nascent careers. Perlin's own conservative estimate places the number of interns in America right now at two million. (To contrast, there are currently 800,000 interns in France.) Whether or not they're legal (and a *New York Times* article last year suggested that most current internships aren't) they are seen as a vital stepping-stone to landing a good job, with most entry-level jobs now requiring experience — in the form of internships.

As a category of work, if you can call it that, Perlin says internships are the fastest-growing segment of the American economy. They are especially coveted in what he calls the "glamour" industries — publishing, entertainment and finance. Indeed, though most interns expect their stint to lead to paid employment, or teach them about a particular field, the purpose of many internships is to fob off mind-numbing, though vital, administrative work as a "learning experience." Using unpaid interns saves America's largest firms up to \$2 billion a year. (Apprenticeships, on the other hand, common in blue-collar trades, involve a well-defined period of supervised paid training, followed by union membership and the option of steady work.)


One student, for her summer internship, spent 35 hours a week stuffing envelopes for a major publisher. They were able to avoid paying her since the internship was an "edu-





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Cinema's Rorschach Test

The Tree of Life (2011)
DIRECTED BY TERRENCE MALICK
RELEASED BY FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

After more than two hours the film *The Tree of Life* ends and the words, “written and directed by Terrence Malick” appear on the screen. In response, people boo and clap. I see faces struck with awe and twisted in frustration and realize the film is a Rorschach test. Like the famous psychological test where patients were shown ink blots; the film is a watercolor of cosmic imagery and American family drama that invites projection. And what we see in the reaction is our own buried anxieties about class.

The film itself is innocuous. The fifth directed by hermit-like director Terrence Malick, it is a juxtaposition of the fiery origin and death of the earth with the rise and fall of a Texan family. But according to *Entertainment Weekly*, at the Cannes Film Festival last month people were “shoving and hollering to gain entrance.” Why this passion over a film? It’s because art has two functions: an act of expression by the artist and an act of consumption by the audience. When the people at Cannes elbowed their way in to *The Tree of Life* and days later, I bought my ticket; we were buying the experience of elitism.

The film begins with Jack O’Brien, a somber man played by Sean Penn on the anniversary of his brother’s death. He stares up at his sterile glass towers and the film cuts to the first light of creation, beaming into the void as the sun ignites and the earth casts its shadow into space. Life begins as cells divide and transform into jellyfish then dinosaurs. Just as it seems this 20-minute detour could go on forever — an asteroid hits the planet and we are back with the family. Brad Pitt plays Mr. O’Brien the hard-jawed father terrorizing his family. The mother, Mrs. O’Brien, played by Jessica Chastain shields her three sons, including young Jack played by Hunter McCracken, and shows them how to find rapture in life. Little dialogue exists. Instead the camera floats dreamily around the actors who show a subtlety of emotion rarely seen in American film.

However the question is not if the movie deserves critical acclaim. It’s what else do we gain when we buy the tickets? *The Tree of Life* has the aura of a masterpiece whose treasure only the knowing can apprehend. Buying things to show status is as old as

necklaces found on ancient skeletons and pharaoh tombs stuffed with gold. And so is the critique of it beginning with the Prophet Isaiah in eighth century B.C. decrying the worship of false idols. What is modern is how we buy not things but “experiences” to prove our status. According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*; we often consume art to prove our ability to consume an elite social code.

When we bought tickets to *The Tree of Life* we purchased the right to perform our



cultural competence needed to understand Malick’s dreamy modernist epic. The pleasure the film gives is an elitist one. It reaffirms how much cultural capital a viewer has. Sitting in the dark theater, viewing the Big Bang and DNA coiling into life we inherit centuries of science and feel like we are a part of the grand narrative of human progress. We inherit a sense of our separateness from the masses. Art-house films and theaters are sites of social reproduction of ruling class legitimacy; they recreate class hierarchy through aesthetics.

And yet when the movie ended, I saw the world through Malick’s eyes — my shadow on the sidewalk or the swell of moonlight in the clouds seemed like small miracles. It was then I realized that aside from its social role, art transforms perceptions. It can liberate us from the daily routine that deadens the mind. Despite the status seeking elitism that drives a segment of the audience to see it, the film is a gift. It opens the senses and political change is impossible without first transforming how we experience the world. I stood in the street, gasping in awe at a how a tree swayed or at faces illuminated by the flash of car headlights — and realized the world itself was a Rorschach test. On it we can project all the beauty we have missed, all the freedom we have lost.

—NICHOLAS POWERS

Feudalism

cational experience.” (The start-up agency where I’d interned, at its peak, contained one full-time staffer and eleven part-time interns, all of them responsible for retouching photos.)

Intern Nation includes stories of countless other interns who make up the murky underbelly of government agencies, NGOs, investment firms, publishing houses, arts organizations, television studios and legislators’ offices. These young people’s eagerness, uncertainty, desperation and, ultimately, disappointment, comes through loud and clear. It’s as an anthropological study of a Western rite of passage that this book is most compelling.

Perlin unpacks the various interests in the internship industry so clearly that I wished he’d have an equally clear solution. What’s most clear, alas, is just how good a deal internships are for everyone but the intern. Their stratospheric rise follows the broader tale of the post-industrial economy, which

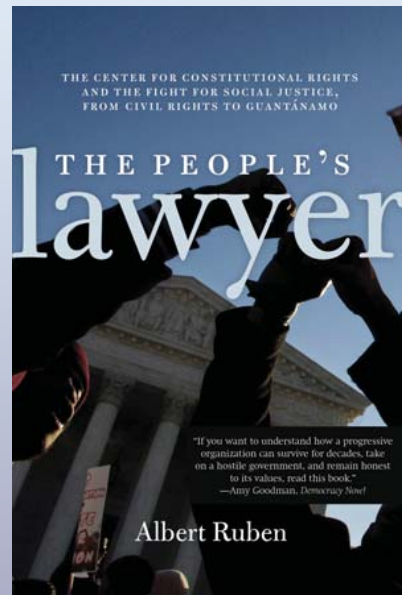
in the past three decades has swelled with part-time, casual, freelance and temp labor. Internships are just the latest frontier in the wild west of the de-regulating labor market.

Perlin is adamant that interns need to “stop underbidding each other” and assert their power by a show of force. I agree, and would love to see interns’ rights reach the public consciousness. And there is hope out there: The book closes with an example of how the architecture industry as a whole stemmed the growth of exploitative internships during the 1990s. Perlin suggests a range of university- and federal-level policies that have the potential to do the same for the nation. Just as in the discussion around reviving organized labor, criticisms of individual internship programs or participants obscure the very real policy issues that must first be addressed for any organizing to be truly effective.

—IRINA IVANOVA

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PALESTINIANS IN AMERICA

An Intelligent Socialist's Guide to Tony Kushner

BY SUSIE DAY

(Scene: An elevator, downstage right. Stuck inside are ROY COHN and ETHEL ROSENBERG, characters in Tony Kushner's landmark play, *Angels in America*. McCarthyite lawyer, ROY prosecuted Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were accused of spying for the U.S.S.R. and executed in 1953. ETHEL now paces impatiently, pushing elevator buttons. Above the stage, captions from recent New York Times headlines wink on and off didactically:)



“CUNY Blocks Honor for Tony Kushner,” “Kushner, a Probing Dramatist of Intellectual Scope and Empathy,” “In Reversal, City University Trustees Approve Honorary Degree for Tony Kushner”

ETHEL: So Tony, you want to tell us why you're writing this corny elevator skit? You thought maybe, “Ethel Rosenberg and Roy Cohn, trapped — how amusing”? This is a *fakakta* idea, Tony.

(Lights, upstage left, where Tony Kushner is at his desk, his back to us.)

ROY: Let the boy alone, Ethel. Don't you see he's got conflicts? You go back and help Julius assemble tractors in the dustbin of history.

ETHEL: Conflicts, Tony? You want I should advise you on the conflicts you probably got about that fancy new degree they're giving you at the City University of New York? The one you almost didn't get because Mr. Jeffrey S. Wiesenfeld of the board pointed out you criticized Israel? (Tony crumples a page, tosses it over his shoulder.)

ROY: Shut up, Ethel. It's *good* to stop Tony from dumping on Israel, so he can keep getting awards. That's great for me — I'm a bigger guy in Hell since they showed reruns of that *Angels* play of his on HBO.

ETHEL: Such nice *goyishe* actors they got to play us, Roy. But we must ask: *Why* did Tony criticize Israel? Tony is a good boy. Tony does not exploit the masses. He criticized because he saw the Palestinians denied their rights and in pain. So Tony gets another degree, but inside he knows there are dialectically historical conditions that must be analyzed.

ROY: Thank you, Ethel, for validating my work in sending you to the electric chair. You were much less repulsive when you stole

secrets of the A-bomb. Tony, I'm guessing you put me here to talk sense. So don't listen to this pinko puke. You got a good life — awards, honorary degrees. The people love Tony Kushner, “dramatist of empathy”!

ETHEL: Which is why Tony, as a feeling person, said that what was done to the Palestinian people when Israel was created was “ethnic cleansing.” This is where Tony's analysis must continue—

ROY: Tony made a little mistake about the



Palestinians. There weren't any. He assumed the native riffraff around in 1948 had feelings. Typical liberal moral-equivalence fallacy.

ETHEL: But this Mr. Wiesenfeld says Tony's an “extremist.” He says his mother would have called Tony a “Nazi collaborator.” (Tony snaps a pencil in two.) This is enough to alienate Tony from his means of production, Roy. (Tony puts his head in his hands.)

ROY: (Pointing to Tony) Now, look what you did. Christ, Ethel, NEVER remind Tony about those guys who call you a Nazi if you disagree with them. They can be scary.

ETHEL: Yeah. Like you were, when you called people reds in the 1950s.

ROY: Tony, if you're going to force me to deal with this Bolshevik broad, I demand you write me with a cigar and some booze. (Pause. ROY reaches into his coat pocket and fishes out a lit cigar and a glass of bourbon.) Thanks.

ETHEL: Speaking of ethnic cleansing, Tony, did you read in the papers what happened when those Palestinian protestors tried to remember the founding of Israel? How many Palestinians you think could be writing award-winning plays if they weren't being shot by the IDF?

ROY: Tony, *relax*. It's all good. Remember how your liberal supporters came through for you? Then you tell your detractors you always believed in Israel's right to exist — *Fantastic!* And, in case anyone notices you're on the board of Jewish Voice for Peace, you say you're against the boycott — *Nice save!* It's like a built-in loyalty oath: “I am not now, nor have I ever been, a critic of Israel.”

ETHEL: So Palestinians are supposed to stop suffering until Tony Kushner gets his honor-

ary degree? All through this media *mishegas*, nobody talks about Palestinians —

ROY: Wrong! Wiesenfeld tells Jim Dwyer of the *New York Times* that Palestinians “worship death for their children” and “are not human.” So the liberals, in order to get the award back for Tony, have to act like Palestine doesn't exist — which ain't hard, 'cause it don't. After all, the whole point of the campaign, is to defend Tony, not to help Palestinians, right?



ETHEL: You're a sick man, Roy.

ROY: No sicker than anybody else about this thing, Ethel. So Wiesenfeld gets props from the conservatives; Tony gets props from the liberals, and Israel gets props from everybody. It's a win-win-win situation!

ETHEL: Not for the Palestinians. Tony, you write about them! Put, for instance, a Palestinian in this script. You call yourself a socialist? You stand up, Mr. Socialist Writer!

ROY: World's a stage, Ethel. People love to play “commie,” put on the T-shirts. Don't mean anybody's a goddamn radical about anything. It's all show biz.

(Tony stands up, kicks over a wastebasket. Ethel crosses to ROY and pours the bourbon over his head. ROY chokes Ethel. Suddenly, the stage shakes, and an ANGEL, played by KARL MARX, crashes through the backdrop and hovers over the stage. He speaks with the voice of a bored elevator operator.)

ANGEL MARX: Much as we'd all like this play to end happily, its material conditions do not permit divine intervention. So everybody out! Third floor: consumer goods, fetishized commodities, lingerie, light bulbs, bulldozers, hummus, hammers, sickles, yarmulkes, *kafiyahs*, flotillas, manifestoes, sheepskin...

(Actors playing ROY AND ETHEL shrug, step out of the elevator, and head back to the dressing room. Tony sighs, turns off his computer, and wanders off. Lights out.)

This article was originally published on MRZine.org.

Susie Day writes a monthly satire column for Gay City News and works at Monthly Review.

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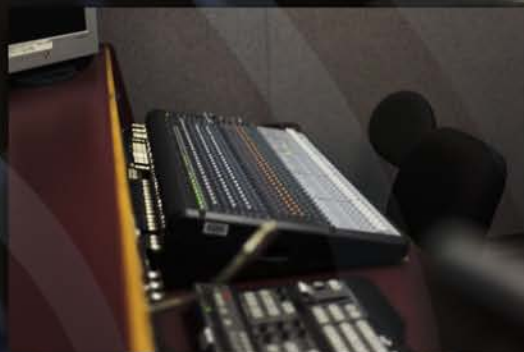
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